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Descriptors-*Affective Behavior, Counselor Performance, *Counselor Training, Emotional Development, *Practicums, Research Projects, *Self Concept, Self Directed Groups, *Sensitivity Training, Students

This study was designed to enhance self understanding in counselor trainees. Research focused on the effect of Self Understanding Groups on practicum enrollees. Two groups, one with 18 practicum students, and another group enrolled in practicum and also involved in Self Understanding Groups, were formed. The criterion measure for the effect of the Self Understanding Groups was Affective Sensitivity measured by a scale dealing with the feeling level responses of counselors. Evidence indicated that Self Understanding Group participation conjoint with practicum enhances affective sensitivity. Limitations were that the subjects were not assigned to groups randomly and that the sample was small and the groups nonequivalent. Subsequent research should focus on whether participation in Self Understanding Groups enhances counselor effectiveness on the job. (Author/EK)

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THE EFFECT OF SELF UNDERSTANDING GROUPS ON THE AFFECTIVE SENSITIVITY OF PRACTICUM STUDENTS

by

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(SPEECH GIVEN AT THE AMERICAN PERSONNEL
AND GUIDANCE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION
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Introduction

First of all, let me share with you my deep regret at not being with you today. I am eagerly looking forward to a feedback session with the panel members after the Convention.

There are several people who deserve a word of recognition. Mr. Kenneth Williams, a graduate student at the University of Maryland and Dr. Bernice Sandler assisted in the collection and analysis of the data. I am grateful for their efforts. I am also pleased that Tom Stipek has agreed to read this paper. We have spent several hours together, and I hope he will be able to respond to your questions during the discussion.

The intent of this panel was to provide an input related to self understanding in counselor education. It was our hope that as a result of the presentations, a significant interchange of ideas would follow during the discussion period. Consequently, this paper will be brief and consist of two major sections. The first will describe one procedure designed to enhance Self Understanding in counselor trainees. The second section will review a research procedure and some findings related to Self Understanding, Practicum, and Affective ensitivity.

Self Understanding Groups

While it might be relevant to present a review of the literature regarding the need for Self Understanding, it seems likely that such a review would be both pedantic and duplicative of your reading. There is a plethora of articles by a wide variety of individuals who endorse the need for Self Understanding.

The program of Self Understanding Groups at the University of Maryland was formed in the Fall of 1967 in conjunction with the Washington School of Psychiatry Group Psychotherapy Training Program. The leaders of the Self Understanding groups were post Doctoral students in the Group Therapy Training program. Their training backgrounds were in Medicine or Clinical Psychology.

Participation in the groups was voluntary but a modest fee of $25.00 was required. This sum of money partially defrayed the cost of biweekly supervision for the leaders. Sessions were on a weekly basis for ninety minutes. Absolute confidentiality was maintained and no information was communicated to the Department of Counseling and Pupil Services relative to the students.

While the emphasis of the groups was on enhancing Self Understanding through group interaction, it would be difficult to describe the orientation of the leaders with much precision. However, the general orientation of the

There is some concentration on the approach of Bion which emphasizes group level processes and functions which are interpreted by the leader from a Freudian orientation. This could be contrasted with the emphasis of the National Training Labs which tends to be more oriented to the interpersonal dynamics of the various members of the group.

But let me caution you from assuming too much from this description. The emphasis varied considerably from individual leader to leader. It is safe to say, however, that the predominant emphasis was more analytic than it was existential.

Practicum

All of the students in our research participated in the Practicum and describing it is no easier. Students were exposed to eight different instructors whose orientations varied from analytic to client centered. Their teaching methods also varied from a rather didactic review and discussion of tape recorded interviews to an approach which emphasized relating in class and comparing that to relating with clients.

Research on the Effect of the Self Understanding Groups

The focus of our research was on the effect of the Self Understanding Groups on students who were in the practicum. The criterion was Affective Sensitivity.

All 30 students who volunteered to participate in the study were taking practicum. Twenty-one were female and nine were male. The two groups which were compared were as follows:

One group of eighteen students who were taking practicum, and another group of students who were enrolled in practicum and also involved in Self Understanding Groups.

The design of the study is illustrated on the handout which we have prepared. It indicates that the study involved pre-post measures of the participating students. According to Campbell and Stanley's classification system, it is a non-equivalent control group design because it does not assign subjects to groups randomly. This unfortunate limitation is unavoidable.

Affective Sensitivity

The criterion measure for the effect of Self Understanding Groups was Affective Sensitivity as measured by a scale developed by Dr. Norman Kagan and Dr. Robert Campbell at Michigan State University.

The scale presents 41 relatively brief interactions between counselors and clients on video tape. Subsequent to viewing an interchange, the subjects were asked to choose one of three statements presented in a booklet. Their choice was to be based on which statement best described what the counselor or the client was feeling.

Evidence for the validity of the scale has been reported by Kagan and Krathwohl (1967) (Interested persons should write to Educational Publication Services, College of Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.) Their basic conclusions from these studies were:

1. that a significant positive relationship between ratings of Affective Sensitivity and the Affective Sensitivity Scale existed and
2. that . . ." . . . high Affective Sensitivity would not assure counselor effectiveness but a certain degree of it would be a prerequisite for it." (1967, 186-7)

Results

Using a t test for independent means, it was determined that there were no pre test differences between the groups of students who elected to participate in the Self Understanding Groups and those who did not. However, post test comparisions of the groups revealed a significant shift in measured Affective Sensitivity of the practicum students. Students who were participants in Self Understanding Groups and Practicum were considerably more accurate in their responses to the Scale.

Table I to be inserted here

Further evidence supporting these findings is found in the pre-post comparisons for each group using a t-test for corrected means, a mild regression in the mean scores for the Practicum only group was found. A substantial increase in Affective Sensitivity was present in the mean scores for the Self Understanding Group. This increase was significant at the 0.025 level of confidence.

Implications of the Findings

There are several implications of the findings which merit consideration. Let me list them briefly:

1. The sample for this study is small and the groups are non-equivalent. The extent of this weakness does not appear to be very substantial in that the pre-test difference in the groups is negligible.

2. The Self Understanding Group Experience when coupled with practicum seemed to influence a static measure of sensitivity. As Kagan has pointed out, there is still the possibility that the affective responsiveness of counselor trainees to clients may be a separate issue. We are currently investigating this through an evaluation of the supervisor's ratings of the performance of those students. I regret that these findings are not yet available.

3. An entirely different issue, which is relevant for discussion is associated with when, where, and how much Self Understanding is needed as a portion of Counselor Education Programs.

I do not believe that this program affords enough impetus for Self Understanding. It is my belief that Self Understanding should permeate each and every course. The focus of this experience described here is very definitely separate and distinct from professional roles and identities. It seems to me that there is a place for understanding yourself in relation to the various bodies of theoretical and research knowledge prevalent in counseling. Indeed, I think that Lister's (1964) thoughts on providing opportunities to develop a personalized theory of couseling is most relevant. This personal theory may well determine a considerable amount of the nature of judgments to be made regarding counselees. These decisions should be made with the full awareness of one's biases.

Summary

There is evidence to indicate that Self Understanding Group participation conjoint with practicum enhances Affective Sensitivity markedly. Issues related to when Self Understanding experiences should be provided and to what extent they should be a part of a program are yet to be resolved. Subsequent research should focus on whether participation in Self Understanding Groups enhances counselor affectiveness on the job.

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TABLE I

Means and Standard Deviations of Affective Sensitivity Scale Scores and t-tests of Differences in Those Means

	Pre		Post		t-test (Pre-Post)
	$\bar{x}$	sd	$\bar{x}$	sd	
Group I (Practicum Only) N = 18	53.3	5.30	53.0	7.12	0.21 (N.S.)
Group II (Practicum Plus Self Understanding Group) N = 12	56.2	8.79	60.3	7.63	2.32*
t-tests (Group I vs. Group II)	1.09(N.S.)		2.62**		

* $t \geq 2.20 > P.025$ with 11 df

** $t \geq 2.46 > P.01$ with 28 df

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